

103D CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1451

To establish an Office of Outreach Coordination in the Social Security Administration to coordinate outreach activities and services, to provide grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations for outreach activities and services, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 13 (legislative day, SEPTEMBER 7), 1993

Mr. RIEGLE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

A BILL

To establish an Office of Outreach Coordination in the Social Security Administration to coordinate outreach activities and services, to provide grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations for outreach activities and services, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “SSI Outreach Act of
5 1993”.

6 **SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.**

7 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

1 (1) many individuals, including senior citizens,
2 homeless individuals, children, and disabled individ-
3 uals, face extraordinary difficulties in securing bene-
4 fits under the Social Security Act, the Food Stamp
5 Act of 1977, and other Federal programs, to which
6 they are otherwise entitled;

7 (2) without the benefits under such programs
8 these individuals, lacking any resources, are unable
9 to secure other vital necessities;

10 (3) many barriers exist that prevent potentially
11 eligible individuals from securing benefits under
12 such programs, including—

13 (A) communication barriers such as illit-
14 eracy in English or a foreign language and sen-
15 sory impairments;

16 (B) disabilities which limit mobility and
17 connections to social services organizations;

18 (C) homelessness often coupled with men-
19 tal illness, drug addiction, or alcoholism;

20 (D) distrust or fear of government bu-
21 reaucracy;

22 (E) concern that eligibility will preclude fu-
23 ture work attempts;

24 (F) lack of transportation;

25 (G) lack of access to a telephone;

1 (H) lack of an understanding of how to
2 contact Social Security Administration field of-
3 fices;

4 (I) lack of any connections to social service
5 organizations; and

6 (J) cognitive or other mental impairments
7 which limit a person's ability to understand
8 benefits, rights, or procedures.

9 (b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to over-
10 come the barriers to securing benefits under the Social
11 Security Act and the Food Stamp Act of 1977 faced by
12 many homeless individuals and other hard to reach popu-
13 lations by establishing an office in the Social Security Ad-
14 ministration which will be responsible for coordinating
15 outreach activities and services, including an outreach
16 grant program. The grant program will help establish in-
17 novative approaches to identify individuals potentially eli-
18 gible for such benefits and to aid such individuals in the
19 application process for such benefits.

20 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF OUTREACH CO-**
21 **ORDINATION.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and
23 Human Services (hereafter referred to in this Act as the
24 “Secretary”) shall, within 180 days after the date of the
25 enactment of this Act, establish within the Social Security

1 Administration an Office of Outreach Coordination, to be
2 administered by a Director of Outreach Coordination
3 (hereafter in this section referred to as the "Director")
4 who shall be appointed by the Commissioner of Social Se-
5 curity.

6 (b) DUTIES OF THE DIRECTOR.—The Director
7 shall—

8 (1) administer the grant program established
9 under section 4 and provide technical assistance to
10 the entities receiving grants under such section;

11 (2) formulate and provide information and tech-
12 nical assistance to Social Security Administration
13 field offices regarding—

14 (A) outreach policies and methods; and

15 (B) local outreach activities and services;

16 and

17 (3) implement the requirements of section 1635
18 of the Social Security Act.

19 **SEC. 4. GRANTS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND NON-**
20 **PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS FOR OUTREACH.**

21 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, through the
22 Office of Outreach Coordination in the Social Security Ad-
23 ministration (established under section 3), provide grants
24 to local governments and nonprofit organizations submit-
25 ting applications to the Secretary under this section, to

1 conduct outreach activities and services targeted at home-
2 less individuals and other hard to reach populations, as
3 determined appropriate by the Secretary.

4 (b) GRANT CRITERIA.—The Secretary shall provide
5 grants under this section only to entities that demonstrate
6 to the Secretary that the entities—

7 (1) have experience with low-income people;

8 (2) have, in the case of entities applying for
9 grants to work with a specific hard to reach popu-
10 lation, sufficient experience in working with such
11 population, including—

12 (A) knowledge of the community in which
13 such population lives; and

14 (B) proficiency in any applicable foreign
15 language;

16 (3) are able to conduct outreach activities and
17 services appropriate to the targeted hard to reach
18 population, including—

19 (A) regular visits to places frequented by
20 homeless individuals, including soup kitchens,
21 homeless shelters, street sites, and day centers;

22 (B) the provision of information to individ-
23 uals and organizations regarding eligibility for
24 benefits under the Social Security Act and the
25 Food Stamp Act of 1977, and provision of ap-

1 plications to apply for benefits under such pro-
2 grams;

3 (C) the provision of assistance to individ-
4 uals in completing applications to establish eli-
5 gibility for benefits under the Social Security
6 Act and benefits under the Food Stamp Act of
7 1977; and

8 (D) the provision of assistance to individ-
9 uals with respect to—

10 (i) obtaining appointments for any
11 medical examination required in order to
12 obtain benefits for which such individuals
13 may be eligible under the Social Security
14 Act so that all such examinations take
15 place within 2 weeks after submission of
16 the application for benefits under such Act;

17 (ii) obtaining and developing evidence
18 of disability and supporting documentation
19 for nondisability-related eligibility require-
20 ments under the Social Security Act; and

21 (iii) other matters relevant to obtain-
22 ing benefits under the Social Security Act,
23 including arranging transportation, and
24 where appropriate, arranging for persons

1 to accompany applicants to any necessary
2 medical examinations; and

3 (4) are able to meet such further requirements
4 as the Secretary determines to be appropriate to
5 carry out the purposes of this section.

6 (c) ASSISTANCE TO APPLICANTS AND BENE-
7 FICIARIES WHO ARE HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS IN OB-
8 TAINING NEEDED GOODS AND SERVICES.—An entity that
9 receives a grant under this section to conduct outreach
10 activities to homeless individuals may use some of the
11 funds received under the grant to assist homeless individ-
12 uals in gaining access to appropriate services in the com-
13 munity, including permanent housing assistance, nutri-
14 tion, physical and mental health care, and case manage-
15 ment services.

16 (d) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary
17 shall provide that each entity receiving grants under this
18 section shall be required to prepare and submit to the Of-
19 fice of Outreach Coordination an annual report on the use
20 of grant funds and on the activities of the entity under-
21 taken to carry out the purposes of this section.

22 (e) GRANT FUNDS.—In order to provide for grants
23 under this section, the Secretary shall set aside and utilize
24 no less than .37 percent of the amounts available on an

1 annual basis for the administrative expenses of the Social
2 Security Administration.

3 (f) ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS.—The Secretary
4 shall—

5 (1) promulgate such regulations as may be nec-
6 essary to carry out this section within 240 days
7 after the date of the enactment of this Act;

8 (2) notify local governments and nonprofit or-
9 ganizations of the availability of grant funds under
10 this section within 270 days after the date of the en-
11 actment of this Act; and

12 (3) begin to award grants under this section as
13 described in subsection (a) within 360 days after the
14 date of the enactment of this Act and annually
15 thereafter.

16 **SEC. 5. SPECIAL PROCEDURES RELATING TO HOMELESS**
17 **INDIVIDUALS.**

18 (a) EXPEDITED CONSIDERATION OF APPLICA-
19 TIONS.—Within 240 days after the date of the enactment
20 of this Act, the Secretary shall promulgate regulations to
21 ensure that, in determining disability for purposes of
22 awarding benefits under the Social Security Act, priority
23 consideration shall be given to applications received from
24 homeless individuals.

1 (b) ASSISTANCE IN FILING DOCUMENTS FOR APPEAL
2 AND IN SEEKING REPRESENTATION.—If the Secretary is-
3 sues a decision to deny, suspend, reduce, or terminate ben-
4 efits under the Social Security Act to a homeless individ-
5 ual, the Secretary shall take affirmative steps to locate
6 the individual and—

7 (1) inform the individual of the importance of
8 appealing such decision; and

9 (2) if the individual indicates a desire to file
10 such an appeal, assist the individual in filing the
11 necessary forms.

12 (c) PROCEDURE GOVERNING THE POTENTIAL DE-
13 NIAL OR SUSPENSION OF BENEFITS FOR A HOMELESS IN-
14 DIVIDUAL.—

15 (1) DETERMINATION.—Before the Secretary de-
16 cides to deny, reduce, suspend, or terminate benefits
17 under the Social Security Act to a homeless individ-
18 ual on the grounds that the individual must provide
19 additional information before receiving, or continu-
20 ing to receive, such benefits, the Secretary shall de-
21 termine whether the individual is likely to have dif-
22 ficulty in responding to the request due to—

23 (A) a mental or physical impairment;

24 (B) advanced age;

25 (C) inability to communicate in English;

- 1 (D) lack of transportation;
- 2 (E) lack of a fixed address; or
- 3 (F) any other comparable limitation.

4 (2) ACTION.—If the Secretary determines that
5 an individual has one of the limitations described in
6 paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

7 (A) take affirmative steps to locate the in-
8 dividual and assist the individual in filing an
9 appeal from an adverse decision regarding such
10 benefits, and in securing the evidence required
11 to establish eligibility for, or to restore, such
12 benefits; and

13 (B) try to contact the individual by tele-
14 phone and, if unsuccessful, make a personal
15 visit to the last known address of the individual,
16 contact individuals in the neighborhood, friends,
17 or the post office, of the individual, and, to as-
18 sist in these efforts, contact social agencies,
19 shelters, soup kitchens, and any other agencies
20 that provide services to homeless individuals.

21 (3) RESTORATION OF BENEFITS.—If the efforts
22 described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of para-
23 graph (2) are unsuccessful, and such benefits are de-
24 nied, suspended, reduced, or terminated, and the in-
25 dividual within 12 months of such denial, suspen-

1 sion, reduction, or termination contacts the Social
2 Security Administration with the necessary informa-
3 tion to seek restoration of benefits, the Secretary
4 shall—

5 (A) immediately resume payment of such
6 benefits; and

7 (B) from funds retained in the local office
8 accounts, pay the benefits of the individual for
9 the current month and for subsequent months
10 until regular monthly payments of benefits re-
11 sume.

12 (d) REGULATIONS ON PRESUMPTIVE DISABILITY.—

13 Within 60 days after the date of the enactment of this
14 Act, the Secretary shall promulgate regulations to ensure
15 that presumptive disability payments made under section
16 1631(a)(4)(A) of the Social Security Act and emergency
17 advance payments made under section 1631(a)(4)(B) of
18 such Act are fully available to homeless individuals.

19 **SEC. 6. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**

20 (a) EVALUATIONS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall prepare
22 an evaluation of the activities carried out under this
23 Act.

1 (2) CRITERIA.—At a minimum, the criteria
2 used by the Secretary in evaluating such activities
3 shall—

4 (A) fully take into account the special cir-
5 cumstances of the individuals reached through
6 the outreach activities conducted under this Act
7 and the need of such individuals for personal-
8 ized attention and follow-through assistance;
9 and

10 (B) emphasize the extent to which—

11 (i) the procedures used to carry out
12 the outreach activities take into account
13 such circumstances; and

14 (ii) the assistance made available to
15 such individuals through such activities
16 meets such need.

17 (b) REPORTS.—Not less frequently than annually,
18 the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate committees
19 of Congress a full and complete report containing the eval-
20 uation described in subsection (a) and such recommenda-
21 tions for additional legislative or regulatory action as the
22 Secretary may determine to be appropriate.

23 **SEC. 7. DEFINITION.**

24 For purposes of this Act, the term “homeless individ-
25 ual” means any individual—

1 (1) who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate
2 nighttime residence; or

3 (2) whose primary nighttime residence is—

4 (A) a supervised publicly or privately oper-
5 ated shelter designed to provide temporary liv-
6 ing accommodations (including a welfare hotel,
7 a congregate shelter, and transitional housing
8 for the mentally ill);

9 (B) an institution that provides a tem-
10 porary residence for individuals intended to be
11 institutionalized; or

12 (C) a public or private place not designed
13 for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping ac-
14 commodation for human beings.

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